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recent resumption of activity, after five years' interruption, we are pleased to note.¹

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"The Song of Roland" Done into English, in the Original Measure.

By CHARLES SCOTT-MONCRIEFF. With an Introduction by G. K. CHESTERTON and a Note on Technique by GEORGE SAINTSBURY. London: Chapman & Hall, Ltd., 1919. Pp. xxii+131.

"La Chanson de Roland." Traduction nouvelle d'après le Manuscrit d'Oxford. Par HENRI CHAMARD. Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1919. Pp. xi+ 224.

"The poets can be well translated only in verse" is the judgment of M. Chamard; this was also Captain Moncrieff's opinion, and both have adopted the traditional decasyllable. The author of the English translation revives assonance, in the effort to be very literal; in the French, rhyme is used, but with a free arrangement which results in a pleasing sense of ease and flow. Both are unusually successful in preserving the simplicity and vigor of the original. Mr. Saintsbury thinks the Moncrieff translation "is not merely in detail but in general effect, the most faithful version I have ever seen of the great Song."

But no translator, however gifted and trained in linguistics, can escape the hard condition that his work must have its basis in a pre-established text: no fountain rises higher than its source. Thus it is that a certain sense of shortcoming hangs over all these persistent efforts to present the most famous Old French epic to modern readers in their vernacular. Not long ago, in this *Journal* (XVI, 569-70), we remarked that it is surprising to find how little has been done of recent years to study the language (and we might have added, the versification) of the Oxford *Roland*. As Alfred Jeanroy said recently in a presidential address before the Société des Anciens Textes français: "Il est attristant de penser que l'on chercherait en vain dans notre collection la *Chanson de Roland*."² Moncrieff, to our regret, based his work upon the Petit de Julleville text of 1878, which fell by accident under

¹ Other works of medieval French literature announced by the Society as in press are: Guillaume de Machaut, Vol. III (Hoepffner); the short biographic epic *Doon de la Roche* (P. Meyer); the first volume of a *Recueil de Jeux-Partis* (Jeanroy and Långfors); the *Roman de la fille du Comte de Pontieu* (Brunel). We regret to note the continued postponement of the publication of the edition of the *Châtelain de Couci* which was almost completed in 1910 by J. E. Matzke (*Mod. Phil.*, VIII, 304; *Matzke Memorial Volume*, 1911, p. 11) and to which M. Bédier then undertook to add an introduction and a glossary. This last important work of our late co-Editor was on the eve of publication in 1913, but, to the regret of many, was then side-tracked to make way for M. Bédier's *Lai de l'Ombre*.

² *Bulletin de la Société*, 46^e Année (1920), p. 35.

his hand; M. Chamard, who had enjoyed the counsels of M. Bédier, went directly to the Oxford manuscript as printed by Gröber.

If we select two famous lines for illustration:

1861 Tere de France, mult estes dulz païs
Oï desertét a tant rubostl exill

all the editors agree that "rubostl" is a scribal blunder for *rubeste* 'rude,' 'harsh'; but what, exactly, is "exill"? Let us observe the translators at work:

I. Butler (1904):

O France, fair land, today art thou made desolate by rude slaughter.

J. Geddes (1906):

Terre de France, ma douce patrie, rendue déserte aujourd'hui par si cruel malheur!

A. S. Way (1913):

O Land of France, an exceeding pleasant land art thou;
But of all these noble vassals thou sittest widowed now!

Moncrieff:

Douce land of France, o very precious clime,
Laid desolate by such a sour exile!

Chamard:

Terre de France, ô mon très doux pays,
De quels soutiens tu es veuve aujourd'hui!

Is it not plain that until we know the precise meaning of *eissil* we shall not have taken the first step toward a satisfactory French or English equivalent of these lines? Here is a pure problem of word-history: it seems possible that Latin *exiliare* and a verb represented by Norse *scilja* 'separate out,' 'cut off,' have, by chance, coincided in form in the OF *essillier*; but, fortunately, the expression *terres essilliées* is frequent enough for us to be reasonably sure of its meaning: it means precisely what we mean by the current phrase "the devastated regions," and *eissil* signifies (aside from 'exile') 'ruin,' 'devastation,' 'ravage.' It is then not simply 'malheur,' nor 'slaughter,' nor yet 'widowhood,' while 'sour exile' conveys to the present writer no very clear idea of any kind.

The very next line:

Baron franceis, por mei vos vei morir

contains a difficulty of another sort. *Por* means here 'because of,' and not 'for the sake of,' as a score of passages in the poem make entirely clear. Messrs. Petit de Julleville, Tavernier, Chamard, and Moncrieff have all fallen into error here; while Gautier, Geddes ('par ma faute'), Miss Butler, A. S. Way ('of my doing'), have rendered the passage correctly. Nor is a mere *nuance* involved in this case: Roland, for the moment, is not eulogizing the loyalty of his subordinates; he is, exactly like Hector before Troy,

bitterly reproaching himself because "by trusting his own might, he undid the host." Is it not also plain that no one should attempt to give the public a modern version of a famous epic of the olden time without considerable preliminary study of the olden tongue?

In spite of such shortcomings, avoidable and unavoidable, both these new translations¹ will render good service. That of M. Chamard especially abounds in felicitous phrasing, and gives an excellent impression of the poem as a whole. But, to attain the desired directness and simplicity, there is also great gain in the regular use of assonance: witness a short passage, the concluding lines:

"Summon the hosts, Charlès, of thine Empire,
Go thou by force into the land of Bire,
King Vivien thou'lt succor there, at Imphe,
In the city which pagans have besieged.
The Christians there implore thee and beseech."
"God!" said the King: "My life is hard indeed!"
Tears filled his eyes, he tore his snowy beard.
So ends the tale. . . .

Upon this close, Mr. Chesterton comments with some eloquence: "The poem ends as it were with a vision and vista of wars against the barbarians; and the vision is true. For that war is never ended, which defends the sanity of the world against all the stark anarchies and rending negations which rage against it forever."

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Ronsard et l'Humanisme. Par PIERRE DE NOLHAC. (227ème fascicule de la Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes). Paris: Edouard Champion, 1921. Pp. xi+365.

L'ouvrage fort érudit de M. de N. est divisé en quatre parties d'inégale longueur. La première et la plus longue est consacrée à "Ronsard l'Humaniste: l'éducation, le milieu, les lectures." La seconde étudie "Ronsard et les Humanistes de son temps." La troisième, intitulée "Les écrits latins de Ronsard" est très courte, car ce fut un des grands mérites de Ronsard de s'être habituellement abstenu de latiniser selon le goût du temps, mais elle contient un document inédit de grand intérêt: l'éloge latin où Ronsard a si fort malmené Pierre de Paschal, l'historiographe du Roi, celui même qu'avait signalé Laumonier dans les *Oeuvres Complètes* (VII, 138) comme récemment découvert par M. de Nolhac. Le MS s'en trouve à la Bibliothèque de Munich, parmi d'autres appartenant à la collection Jean de

¹ Another, in Italian, is announced: *La Canzone d'Orlando*, tradotta dal Conte G. L. Passerini. viii+198 pp. Città di Castello: Casa editrice Il Solco, 1922. M. Bédier's translation is expected from the press almost daily.